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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 3691
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 3084
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000084

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN SEEKS SIGNS FROM THE U.S. OF LONG-TERM
COMMITMENT TO THE RELATIONSHIP

REF: BISHKEK 51

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d).

11. (C) Action request para. 8.

12. (C) Summary: The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is actively reviewing the state of its relationships with the U.S., Russia, and China, seeking a balance which would best serve its interests. A key concern of our interlocutors is what role the U.S. intends to play in Kyrgyzstan in the medium and long-term. Signals, intentional or otherwise, which we give over the coming weeks may significantly affect Kyrgyz attitudes, and could affect our ability to use the Manas Transit Center and other valuable Kyrgyz transit routes. End Summary.

Trial Period

13. (C) Numerous meetings with Foreign Minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev, Director of the Central Agency for Development (and son of the President of Kyrgyzstan) Maxim Bakiyev, and other officials of the Kyrgyz Republic over the past weeks have left us with the strong impression that we are in a "trial period" in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz took an important step away from their closest international partner, Russia, and toward us in agreeing to host the Transit Center last year. They are running the balance on that decision right now.

14. (C) We are confident that that balance is now positive. Efforts to speed up the payment process for the second quarter of Manas Transit Center operations, the beginning of preliminary construction on the airport ramp project, the progress in disbursement and deliveries under our counternarcotics and counterterrorism programs, the upcoming visit by DOD to review the progress of the air traffic control upgrade program, efforts by the Transit Center to contract with Kyrgyz providers of goods, numerous humanitarian projects by the Transit Center, and a good deal of effective public diplomacy work have kept this ledger in the black.

Long vs. Short Term Interest?

¶15. (C) However, the Kyrgyz remain very uneasy about our long-term intentions. Although we have been able to assuage early concerns that the U.S. policy in Afghanistan meant we would be out of that country by 2011, our interlocutors remain concerned that, over the next few years, our need for the Transit Center will evaporate and we will disappear. We believe that the Russians, burned last year, are pressing a new set of talking points intent on convincing the Kyrgyz that the U.S. will turn out to be an unreliable partner and will soon leave. Russia is pressing its desire to have a new base in southern Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyz opposition to that idea seems to be waning.

Potential Regional Jealousies

¶16. (C) The U.S. discussions with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on access to other transportation facilities, and especially air transport facilities, also play into Kyrgyz concerns. It will be crucial as we move forward on any of these options to ensure that the Kyrgyz do not get the impression that we are attempting to somehow "replace" the capabilities we have in Manas.

Minimizing Risk of Renegotiation

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¶17. (C) Our concern is that while a long time frame and an assumption that the U.S. will be in Manas for many years makes the Kyrgyz easier to work with and more acquiescent to our needs, the growing belief that the U.S. is in the last year(s) of its tenure at Manas might well lead the Kyrgyz to become more demanding. At its most problematic, it could lead to a decision on their part that they should reopen the Manas negotiations with an eye toward maximizing short-term benefits while we remain highly dependent on the Transit Center for our operations in Afghanistan. At this point, we do not expect that to happen. We do believe that it is crucial that the USG take steps to minimize such a possibility.

¶18. (C) Action Request: In that regard, we request that the Department consider the following issues:

-- We believe that it would be best to request renewal of the Transit Center Agreement as soon as possible. The longer we wait, the more time the Kyrgyz have to speculate about our intentions.

-- In requesting renewal of the Transit Center Agreement, we recommend using language suggesting that the USG would like to begin discussions of our long-term relationship and possible long-term access to facilities at Manas. This issue should also be broached at the Annual Bilateral Consultations.

-- Keeping-up contacts with Kyrgyzstan. Where high level contacts are made with Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, parallel contacts with Kyrgyzstan would make sense. A Cabinet level visit to the Transit Center would pay huge dividends. A high level meeting for the Kyrgyz Annual Bilateral Consultations delegation, to be headed by Maxim Bakiyev and FM Sarbayev, would also make a real difference.

-- If we move forward with new air transit capabilities in another Central Asian country, it would help for us to provide the Kyrgyz Government with a heads-up, emphasizing that the capabilities we have at Manas are not being replaced.

-- Maintaining assistance levels. The Kyrgyz will be very sensitive to any changes in our level of support and engagement.

GFOELLER